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## HERMANN KIRCHNER'S *SAPIENTIA SOLOMONIS*

Hermann Kirchner, of Marburg, adapted for the stage the *Sapientia Solomonis* of Sixt Birck in 1591 and in the same year falls, according to the Preface, the beginning of the *Coriolanus*.<sup>1</sup> As the *Sapientia Solomonis* was performed in June of that year and as the Preface to *Coriolanus*, dated *Idibus Aug. 1599*, says it was nearly eight years ago that he began the work, it would seem that the *Sapientia Solomonis* is the prior production.

The title-page<sup>2</sup> shows the origin and history of the piece. Scherer pointed out<sup>3</sup> the fact that the interpolation of the comic scenes was from Frischlin's *Rebecca*. Keller refers<sup>4</sup> to the performance of a modified version of Birck's *Sapientia Solomonis* in England before Queen Elizabeth (at Oxford or Cambridge) in 1565 or 1566. As far as I have been able to learn we do not know of any performance of this play of Birck's in Germany up to the one of Kirchner's version in Marburg in 1591. The existence of a printed copy of the play before this adaptation by Kirchner was unknown to Goedeke. It is well known now that it is included in the *Dramata Sacra, Comoediae atque tragoediae aliquot e Veteri Testamento desumptae* (Basileae, 1547).

Kirchner's Preface gives some information about the history of the adaptation. It opens with a general argument in favor of the drama as a source of pleasure to the eyes, ears, and mind, as well as a source of various kinds of profit. The school drama is not merely a diversion but a prelude or preparation for the pulpit, the teacher's desk, and the tribune in public life and in the courts; Cicero is said to have received valuable aid, as an orator, from the friendship and emulation of Roscius, the actor, and Demosthenes also received

<sup>1</sup> For an account of Hermann Kirchner and his *Coriolanus* (1591) see *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, XXXIII, 2 (June, 1918), 269-301.

<sup>2</sup> *Sapientia / Solomonis Dra / mate comicotragico / descripta olim / a Xysto Betuleio, / recognita nunc, aucta et ezornata, aspersis / Frischliniani Gastrodis nonnul / lis salibus. / Extemporali opera, imolusu succisivo, sub / festino actionis accinctu / Hermannii Kirchneri. / Symbolon Solomonis: / Vanitas vanitatum et omnia vanitas. / Marpurgi 1591.* The copy of the play in the Royal Library in Berlin is apparently the only one in existence.

<sup>3</sup> *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie*, on Sixt Birck.

<sup>4</sup> *Shakespeare Jahrbuch*, XXXIV, 224.

benefit from the stage. The Preface contains also the dedication of the work to the rector, vice-chancellor, deans and professors of the university.

It is interesting to note what changes Kirchner made in adapting Birck's play to the performance in Marburg. The most of these were in the way of correcting Latin that was faulty in grammatical or metrical respects. In twenty-nine places such changes were made. Other alterations involve small changes in ideas, as changes in the prologue to make it conform more nearly to the norm of the Latin school drama, in giving the source of the play, exhorting the audience to keep silent and begging their favor for the piece; or when at the end of the Gastrodes scene Frischlin's line: *Nam herus nos expectat sub ostio* becomes *Nam venter non patitur moram*; or when the elephants which Birck had the Queen of Sheba bring with her are dispensed with by Kirchner. Several small and unimportant details are omitted for reasons which are not altogether clear: B. 43 (= Birck's play, p. 43), *Meroe canit Solomonta; quicquid Candaces / Dictamini patet, notique climata: / Et Aethiops*, etc. = K. 61 (= Kirchner's adaptation, p. 61), *Meroe canit Solomonta regem: praedicat / Et Aethiops*, etc.

Omissions, substitutions, and additions, by Kirchner, constitute the most important changes in the play. The choruses of Birck's play at the end of each act, usually in Sapphic stanzas and meters, paraphrasing parts of certain chapters of the Proverbs, fall out and in their places are put, in several instances, the comic scenes from Frischlin's *Rebecca*, in which the clown Gastrodes appears. These scenes are, however, further elaborated by independent additions of Kirchner, along with the addition of one new scene, either original or from a source not known to me. Thus after the *Argumentum*, just before the first act, there is omitted *Chorus, Ex Cap. / proverbiorum VIII Sub perso / na Sapientiae / Ode tricolos tristrophos, sicut illa Prudentia, / per quinquennia iam decem*. Also after Act IV, scene 5, is omitted *Chorus Ex Cap. Proverb. 9. eo genere quo est Horatianum illud, Solvitur acris hyems*, as well as at the end of Act V, scene 5, *Chorus, Ex nono cap. Proverb. ut illud Horatianum, Sic te diva potens Cypri*, and also at the end of Birck's play Kirchner omits the sixty-eight lines of the *Chorus Ex Psalmo LXXII. Quo veri*

*Solomonis, Christi nimirum, sapientia et iustitia describitur; in quo absolute felicitis regni status, quasi typo quodam depingitur versu Choriambico.*

At the end of Act I, which Birck closes with a *Chorus, ex eodem* (8) *Proverbiorum cap. versu Choriambico*, Kirchner uses as scene 6 the scene between Gastrodes and Chamus in Act IV (scene 5) of Frischlin's *Rebecca*. In place of Chamus he has Syba and, not finding the scene in Frischlin long enough for his purpose, he prefaced it with sixty-six original lines, a monologue by Gastrodes in which the clown characterizes himself as a true parasite. By being so he has arrived *ad hanc adipem*. The court of Solomon is little to his taste. They worship there a new goddess,

Deamque nescio quam (Temperentiam  
Vocant) adhibent suis, dum potant, poculis  
Tam modicis, ut vix primores labias  
Nedum interiores fauces nedumque utrumque latus  
Tingas: philosophis hanc libens relinquo sobriam  
Mensam, vapores qui cerebro suo timent,  
Aut delicatulis illis puellulis  
Quae fieri curatura iuncea student,  
Mei mei stomachi per Saciam hospites  
Non sunt.

He sees Syba coming to find him. The latter announces that Gastrodes is wanted by the soldiers at the banquet, which is just about to begin, but he must take care not to be seen by the master of the feast; otherwise he will be driven out. Then begins the scene as in Frischlin.

At the end of Act II, we have in Birck, *Chorus ex eodem* (8) *Proverbiorum capite, versu Sapphico (Illa ego prudens Sapientia, ecce)*. In place of it Kirchner gives as Act II, scene 6, a scene from Act IV, scene 6, of the *Rebecca*, prefacing it, as previously, for the sake of introduction and connection with the story, with twenty-five lines of his own and stage directions. The same Marcolphus whom Birck used later in this drama in the comic parts is also brought in here in Kirchner's original scene—a comic encounter between Gastrodes, the glutton and winebibber, and the bully Marcolphus, in which the latter is dismissed with a blow on the ear. Then Symptota

(Ismael in Frischlin) comes, between whom and Gastrodes (as in Frischlin) there ensues a long conversation filled with incredible stories and exaggerations.

Between scenes 1 and 2 of Act III of Birck's play there is interpolated by Kirchner a dialogue between Justitia and Prudentia, of forty-three lines, which seems to be original with him:<sup>1</sup>

*Jus.:* Ego parentis dicor summi filia  
 Astraera, lances quae manibus, quae cuspidem  
 Sonti timendam tempero, quae regibus  
 Asto fidelis purpureis pedissequa,  
 Aulas tueor, domosque, et altas curias;  
 Per me tribunal, per me stat praetorium. . . . .  
  
 Adsis, soror, mecum regi, Prudentia,  
 Et sensa regis iudicantis dirige.

*Prud.:* Adsum Dei cerebro prognata, maximum  
 Mortalium donum, a Deo expetenda Olympico,  
 Mei expetita regis voto Davididis  
 Donis quem supra mortale ingenium veho,  
 Deisque parem facio videri omnisciis. . . . .

Kirchner puts this as scene 2, that is, between the announcement by the Praeco that Solomon is going to sit in judgment (scene 1 in Birck), and the presentation of the case of the women (scene 2 in Birck). Kirchner's original scene is in the nature of a chorus and is the only addition of his to the play which is not in the comic spirit. He seems in general to have aimed to fill with comic scenes the places he left vacant by dropping out the choruses of Birck and thus he worked, as did Frischlin, in the spirit of the age which was soon to witness, if it had not already done so, such mixtures of the serious and the comic in dramas, in the productions of Kyd, Marlowe, and Shakespeare, which the English comedians brought to Germany. As the *Rebecca* contained only two scenes in which Gastrodes appears, and as these two scenes were used in filling up the gaps of the first two acts of the revised play, it was necessary to turn elsewhere for the necessary humor. Marcolphus, formerly devil, had degenerated

<sup>1</sup> An adaptation of Birck's *Sapientia Solomonis*, played in 1565 or 1566 before Queen Elizabeth of England, preserved in the British Museum, has the allegorical figures, Justitia, Pax, and Sapientia, and in it, as in our play, the humorous element is amplified, especially the part of the clown Marcolphus. See Boas, *The University Drama in the Tudor Age* (1914), p. 21.

in Birk's play to the rôle of clown or court jester, who with impunity jests even with the king himself. Kirchner supplies, whether original or borrowed I am unable to say, a scene in which he brings on the stage the original Marcolphus, Moloch Satanus himself. Before Birk's Act IV, scene 1, containing the story of Solomon's embassy to Hiram, king of Tyre, to ask for skilled architects to help in building the temple, is interpolated this new scene:

Cacodaemon indignatur et ringitur, quod in nulla aulae parte  
haerere posit.

Moloch Satanus solus.

Opera hic mea frigent: frustra dudum hanc aulam circumcursito:  
Frustra laboro, et sudo: fumos frustra et ignes torqueo:  
Operam omnem, et vigilias perdo meas; . . . .

He fears Solomon, yet he cannot explain to himself why he does so. He will move all Acheron to accomplish the destruction of the temple and he believes that at some time it will fall before his lightnings and flames. Meanwhile he will endeavor to corrupt Solomon *per foeminas malas*. He retires in terror when he sees the priest Sadochus, of the next scene, approach.

In addition to these scenes, added entire, Kirchner enlarged, by interpolations, in several places the speeches of Birk's characters, carefully putting on the margin in each case the words: *Additamenta Kirchneri*. Thus (Act I, scene 1) five lines are added amplifying the military glory of Solomon's ancestors; in the same scene seventeen lines are added in further glorification of his wisdom; in the next scene twelve lines of Kirchner's are inserted to show that life is ruled by Jehovah and not by the Parcae, Fate, or Necessitas. Birk's trial scene, a favorite in his dramas, was not long enough here to suit Kirchner's taste, and in the statements of the women before the king he gives them each several more lines in which to continue their abuse of each other. When the king decides in favor of the rightful mother, Tecnophila, Kirchner adds a page to her exultations and rejoicings, in which she tells us that although her boy has no father it may not prove a hinderance to him as history has recorded many instances of boys of mean birth who became great; Thama's two sons became princes and Jephta was not injured

by the obscurity of his father. The best recommendation is inner virtue. After a lengthy conversation between Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, in which there is a tiresome amount of flattery, by the Queen, of the wonderful wisdom and riches of Solomon, Kirchner in a few lines of his own again introduces Marcolphus, who compares himself with the strangers:

Ex Aethnae credo hos venisse vaporario  
Homines fuliginosos, o facies nigras!  
Suam quis illis elocabit filiam?  
Meam profecto nolim; quam primum hos videram,  
Speculum consului de mea pulchritudine:  
Video niveum esse me prae illorum coloribus;  
Libet superbire, et reliquos prae me contemnere. . . . .

This play was performed at least once and perhaps twice in Marburg. In the *Staatsarchiv* in Marburg there is entered in the *Marburger Cämerei Rechnung* the following item:

1591

Uff gewöhnliche Ehrenmahl und Gastunge geistlicher und weltlicher Herren und Rahten.

iiii th. iii Sch. iii d. sind 3 Gulden 10 albus 6 Heller sind nach gehaltener Comoedi Salomonis den 14 Junii an Essensspeiz uffgangen, als der Cammerräthe etzlich neben ihren weibern bei Bürgemeister und Rath plieben.

Though this has no mention of the fact that the performance was a university function it does not on the other hand expressly state that it was a performance in the market place, as the following entry shows:

1598

Ausgabe verehrung an Gelt.

13 th. sind 10 Gulden dennen Burgern verehret, welche des Absolonis Tragoediam uffm Marek gespielet den 12 Octobris laut quittung 43,

in which case it was a performance in German, or particularly for the *Kammeräte* or *Bürgermeister* and *Rat*. The occasion for feasting might easily have been in connection with a university drama to

which the city officials were invited. Another entry is of interest here:

Rechnung des Marburger Universitäts Oeconomus.

1591

Gemeine Ausgabe

14 Gulden So Mag. Dns. Rector und Professores denen  
Magistris und Studiosis pro honorario decretirt welche eine  
Comoediam allhier agirt, und der löblichen Universitet  
dedicirt, Inhalt Befelchs hierbey, den 14 Augusti.

This probably refers to the same performance of the *Sapientia Solomonis* as the entry in the *Cämerei Rechnung*, or, possibly, to another performance of the same play. The date given here is merely that of payment of the bill and not of giving of the drama. Kirchner's adaptation, as we saw in the Preface, was dedicated to the university, that is, to the officers and professors of the institution.

It might be possible to conclude that the Latin performance of the play was held before the university authorities and that a German version of the same play, or the play of Joh. Baumgart, *Juditium, Das gericht Salomonis* (1561), or the similarly named drama of Hans Sachs, was performed later in the Rathaus or in the market place; or, the order of the performances in point of time may have been reversed. We know that it was usual to give several performances of plays in some such manner. Thus Baumgart, in the Prologue to the play we have just mentioned, tells of three kinds of performances: a "latein Aktion auf herrenmess" before the school authorities, a German one before the council in the Rathaus, and finally one for the people in the open, generally in the market place.<sup>1</sup>

In view of the fact that the only performance recorded of Birck's *Sapientia Solomonis* was that in England in 1565 or 1566, the question arises as to what may have induced Kirchner and his friends to select this drama for adaptation. It may have been because of the English performance before Queen Elizabeth that the drama commended itself to the court at Hessen, then especially friendly to England. This does not seem at all improbable when we learn that the Latin and popular drama of England was calling forth, it would seem, several imitations in Hessen just about this time. The

<sup>1</sup> Zellwecker, *Prolog und Epilog im deutschen Drama* (1906), p. 63; P. Exp. Schmidt, *Bühnenverhältnisse des deutschen Schuldramas* (1903), p. 45.



play, preserved in manuscript in Cassel, which Johannes Rhenanus wrote and dedicated to Landgrave Maurice in 1613, on the strife between the tongue and the five senses,<sup>1</sup> is a literal translation of the English play *Lingua*,<sup>2</sup> ascribed to Anthony Brewer. The *Grammatica*<sup>3</sup> of Isaac Gilhausen, to which in all likelihood the following entry in the *Rechnung des Marburger Universitäts Oeconomus* refers,

1600

Gemeine Ausgabe.

6 Gulden 4 albus an R'th'l'rn damit M. Gilhausen als er eine  
Comoediam ufm Schloss gehalten inhalt Befehls verehret den  
2 Aprilis,

was written without any reference to the *Priscianus Vapulans* (1571) of Frischlin and, though for the most part an independent dramatization of Guarna's *Grammaticae opus novum* (1511), it is to be referred for comparison with the Latin comedy *Bellum Grammaticale*, which was represented on the stage in Christ Church College in Oxford before Queen Elizabeth on September 24, 1592, the author of which was the theologian Leonard Hutten. Bolte in his book on Guarna and the *Bellum Grammaticale* does not seem, however, to have investigated the relation of Gilhausen's work to the Latin comedy and no answer is given to Scherer's suggestion<sup>4</sup> that such a relationship may exist. Another possibility is that of the play of *Absolom*. As far as I can find out there existed no play of this title in Germany before that of the Magdeburger, Heinrich Roeteler,<sup>5</sup> of the year 1603. It is quite possible that the play of that name, which we have seen was mentioned in the *Marburger Cämerei Rechnung*, is an adaptation or translation of the *Absolom* referred to by Keller<sup>6</sup> as originating in England in Elizabeth's time.

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<sup>1</sup> *Speculum Aestheticum, d. i. eine schöne und lustige Comoedia darin alle Sensus, so wohl innerliche als äusserliche, sambt ihren eygenschaften und Instrumentum erkläret und gleichsam in einem Spiegel vor augen gestellt werden, neben einem lustigen Streitte, da die Zunge der sechste sensus zu seyn, mit der fünf sensibus contendiret.*

<sup>2</sup> *Lingua, or, the Combat of the tongue and the five senses for Superiority: a pleasant Comoeidie, etc., 1607.*

<sup>3</sup> *Grammatica. Das ist: Eine lustige, und für die Angehende Jugend nützliche Comoedia, von den schlüssel aller Künsten, nemlich der Grammatica und ihren Theilen. Durch Isaac Gilhausium Marpurgensem (Franckf. a.M., 1597).*

<sup>4</sup> *Allgem. Deutsche Biographie.*

<sup>5</sup> *Goedeke, II, 153, No. 394.*

<sup>6</sup> *Shakespeare Jahrbuch, XXXIV, 229.*